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Jeffords named UVM ambassador

BURLINGTON — Sen. James Jeffords stood up and gave two thumbs up to the applauding crowd Sunday at the University of Vermont's commencement ceremony after the school's president said the retiring senator would be playing a role as an ambassador for UVM once he leaves the Senate.

Jeffords, a Rutland native and Shrewsbury resident, joined distinguished guests on the platform at UVM's 202nd commencement ceremony held Sunday on the university's campus in Burlington.

UVM President Daniel Fogel briefly addressed Jeffords' upcoming role at UVM during the ceremony.

"I'm pleased today to announce the next chapter of Sen. Jeffords' professional life and service to Vermont will be centered right here at this university," the UVM president said from the podium.

Fogel said the senator will serve in an ambassadorial role at the university, contributing to the College of Education and Social Services' National Institute for Leadership, Disability and Students Placed at Risk.

Beginning in 2007, the UVM president said, Jeffords, I-Vt., also will work with students and faculty as a James Marsh Professor-at-Large.

Fogel also praised the senator's leadership in environmental and conservation issues. Fogel called Jeffords a strong supporter of the university and an example of "compassionate conservatism."

Diane Derby, Jeffords' press secretary, said after the ceremony Sunday that the news that Jeffords would be serving in a role at UVM following his retirement is not necessarily new.

In announcing in April 2005 he would not be seeking re-election in November 2006, the senator said he was "excited about coming home and working with the University of Vermont and other institutions to focus on what I think it's the biggest challenge we face as a nation, the education of our children."

Derby said the senator's role at UVM will be an "ambassadorship" — not a teaching position.

"We're still working through the details. It's a little early to really define what it will be," Debry said Sunday. "It will be working to promote all of the educational initiatives that he promoted as a senator, lending whatever support he can to UVM's education programs."